

# Child and Family Services Update

August 13, 2003

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## “Steal Shamelessly From Others”

### **Breakthrough Series Collaborative Update**

*By Patti Van Wagoner, Deputy Director and Angela Khairallah, Out-of-Home State Specialist*

Steal Shamelessly! That's the motto of the Casey Family Programs Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families. Utah has been involved with this project with a pilot site in Carbon and Emery County in the Eastern Region. The core team members who participated in St. Louis experience were Patti Van Wagoner, Deputy Director of Child and Family Services and Senior Leader of the project, Beverly Hart, Eastern Region Director, Kay Harrison, Office of Licensing, and Lisa McDonald, Utah Foster Care Foundation. Early in May the core team members of the BSC met in St. Louis, Missouri with 19 teams from other states who are involved in this project. The purpose of this second learning session was to celebrate successes, build upon and learn how to spread successes, and identify new strategies and ideas to test.

So, what does it mean to “Steal Shamelessly”? It means “stealing” what has worked in other states and “shamelessly” testing and implementing to create rapid change and spread throughout the pilot site and eventually statewide. A concept that our team learned in St. Louis involves identifying new strategies and ideas to test. One way the BSC encourages this besides stealing shamelessly is by discovering “Found Pilots” throughout the state of Utah. Found pilots are current services and resources, in the child welfare system that our core team could collaborate with to further implement rapid system change.

What are some of our successes? One success that our pilot site is celebrating is the time that it takes for children to be placed with kin. Our goal for this collaborative is for children to be placed with kin within five working days from removal. In January 2003 we implemented the Kinship Question PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act), in our pilot site. This PDSA involved having CPS workers engage families during investigations by asking them, “Who are your supports?” and “Who helps you care for your children?” By asking these simple questions, within six months the average number of days it takes for children to be placed with kin decreased from 44 to 32. As a result of our success, the Kinship Question PDSA has spread throughout Eastern Region and is now ready to be implemented throughout the state.

Another success that we are happy to acknowledge is an increase in engaging, collaboration, and teaming among members of Child and Family Teams in Carbon and Emery County. Our increase can be attributed to having Child and Family Team Meetings take place within six weeks prior to the date of the renewal of a Child and Family Plan. There has been approximately a 50% increase in the number of Child and Family Team members who are attending and participating in the teaming process. This PDSA is in the process of being spread throughout Eastern Region and will soon be able to be implemented statewide.

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The BSC does not “create” new knowledge. It uses existing knowledge based on evidence of what has worked and tries to help systems modify and apply the knowledge to fit their systems’ individual needs. There is a significant variation of practice in the field. Some agencies already may do something well; others do not have as much success. Thus, there is a lot of room for improvement. All improvements require change, but not all changes lead to improvement. We can learn more from collaborating than from working alone. There is no need for every agency in the country to make the same mistakes – and every reason for them to benefit from others’ successes. Collaboration done in a thoughtful, systematic, and carefully facilitated way ensures that this sharing occurs.